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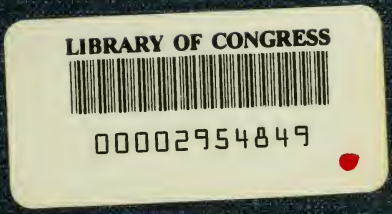

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Text Book of the Past Grand Eminent Guards of the Question Club, adopted at Midsummer Meeting, Narragansett Pier, September Eighth, Nineteen Hundred and Fourteen.

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# THE CYCLES

*Theme by*

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# FIRST CYCLE

## ABANDON OF YOUTH

*"Today—live for it!—*
*O an empty thing*
*This Future is!"*

I

Deride my Creed—my Doctrine—
if you will,
Yet I must nurture
my opinion still:
Futurity demands
no thought of mine—
It has no mission
that I should fulfill.

II

If, living for the present,
I must deign
Feel qualms of Conscience
for the moment's gain,
Repenting later
and entrammel Life—
Ah, then, for me, Life shall
have dawned in vain!

## III

Existence is equivocal.
To shed
Salt-tanged and barren tears
for what's ahead
Would be to misconstrue
what all the Gods
Of Joy and Laughter
have interpreted.

## IV

While broad and clear my vision is—
and vast—
Though some new-gotten prize
should be my last,
For me the Present
is where'er I stand
And watch the Future
fuse into the Past.

V

The rose that sheds its blood
in Motherhood
That Beauty
may be freely understood,
Is plucked and dies,
although the bud lives on,
Nor knows the World is naught
but just and good.

## VI

Tomorrow comes, cloaked
in her fairest guise,
New Worlds of Gain, to conquer,
in her eyes;
We meet, and, Lo—
her raiment cast aside—
We find that Age
has coveted the Prize.

## VII

I cannot be as sanguine
as the Sun,
Who, when the sands of Day
have fully run,
Sinks with a blood-red gleam
of Days to be—
I live this Day—
there is no other one.

## VIII

How oft I sneer
to view the brutal strife
Man makes for Gain
to soothe the Future Life,
Pregnant with lust
to foul his fellow dust
In marts where cunning,
fraud, and sham are rife.

## IX

You speak to me of Hell!—
There is no Hell
Save in that brain where Hope
has ceased to dwell;
Where Reason beats
its bleeding wings against
The strained, revolting
confines of its Cell.

X

Hell is Man's heritage,
you sadly say,
Because he blindly falters
on the way
To what may be!—
Oh, all-wise as you are,
Can *you* prove this to *me?*—
I cry you nay!

XI

The Days to come?—

The Monarch on his throne,

Aweary of uncertainty,

has grown

To look ahead,

anticipating Fate,

Forgetful of the Joys

he might have known.

## XII

The hand that wields the Scepter
often shakes
Before the aftermath of laws
it makes,
For Life asks usury
for what it gives—
Giving but little
for the toll it takes.

## XIII

The King — but human —
shorn of pomp would be.
The Queen of her illusions
would be free
To seek the boon of peace
her subjects find,
Unshackled by the
chains of pageantry.

## XIV

But, no — the King and Queen
have seen the Hand
Upon the Wall,
and likened its command
Unto abandoned Hope,
yet fain must live
The fettered Life
Futurity has planned.

XV

Prate of this Future,
you who cannot see
Beyond the confines
of this Mystery
Called Life, relinquishing
your subtle claim
To what is *Now*
for what you trust *will be!*

## XVI

The savage tribesman,
on his barren isle,
Scoffs at the
malady of Afterwhile;
He knows he lives *Today*,
and, knowing this,
Comes to the Later Day
with artless guile.

## XVII

The beasts of burden,
toiling year by year,
That Man may prosper
and allay his fear
Of later drought,
moil on without complaint,
Ambitionless, resigned,
as Death draws near.

## XVIII

The birds of passage,
with their hearts atune
With dripping song
to be forgotten soon,
Fly on and on until,
their pinions limp
With Age, they pass
into that Endless Swoon.

XIX

The honey bee
that feasts upon the Rose
Of Paradise that by
Life's pathway blows,
Sips of its fill
until the night draws on,
Then passes as the
wilting petals close.

## XX

The fawn that treks
the jungle, innocent
Of Omnipresent Doom,
is all-content
To live its span,
predestined though it is
To be by mightier fauna
torn and rent.

## XXI

The tragedies that fill
the lives of those
Born to the vaunted
purple oft disclose
The miseries that come
from knowing that
The prick of thorns
is hidden by the Rose.

## XXII

Dumb brutes, who answer
to your beck and call,
Straining the leash
of bondage till they fall
To lifeless Clay —
how sadder they than you,
Who speak of Future Hell
in fear withal!

## XXIII

What care they for the
coming of the years?
Harassed by none of
Mankind's greatest fears,
They fill their niche in ignorance,
then pass
Unmourned, unloved from out
this Vale of Tears.

## XXIV

While you, who feel mine
is the greater loss
Because I sift pure pleasure
from the dross
Of Sweet Existence,
stagger on your way
Beneath the weight
of Future's leaden Cross.

## XXV

Your mind-born Creed—
the Toy of Fickle Fate!—
Shaped in the effigy
of Hope, to sate
A brain bewarped
by Faith intangible—
Why should it, cast with mine,
preponderate?

## XXVI

You strive, you scheme,
you barter to achieve,
That you may be adjudged
by what you leave
When Life is finished,
fearing that disdain
Of those who reach the heights
for which you grieve.

## XXVII

You pass and, for the nonce,
Men say Success
Has wholly crowned your efforts;
but the stress
Of their applause
is for the chattels you
Have left—your crumbling Clay
is valueless.

## XXVIII

Seek not to lead me
to that Future Day
Of which you prattle
in the awkward way
Of new-born babes; but,
rather, let me tread
The perfumed highway of Today,
I pray.

## XXIX

Prate not of Knowledge
you will never know
Beyond the compass
of beliefs that flow
As variable as winds
upon the wastes
Of desert lands and seas—
'tis better so.

## XXX

Today—live for it!—
Oh, an empty thing
This Future is of which
you blithely sing!
Fill up the Cup of Gladness
while you may,
Enjoy that sweet abandon
it will bring!

## XXXI

If I might know that some day—
when, who knows?—
My Life would bloom
and blossom as the Rose,
What would it matter?—
I would still embrace
The Joys the Present
and Today disclose.

## XXXII

I still would hold, clutched tightly
to my breast,
The Pleasures of the *Now*,
each moment dressed
In more alluring raiment—
find the Prize
That you, in Future Days,
have faintly guessed.

## XXXIII

If, in my lethal Creed,
I clutch the skirts
Of Momentary Joy,
who gaily flirts
Before mine eyes and taunts me
to my Doom,
What matter if
the outcome sadly hurts?

## XXXIV

Ah, call me what you will—
base, dissolute—
Because your Liturgy
I dare refute!
The vines of Present Pleasures
droop beneath
A bounteous yield—
I fain would pluck the fruit.

XXXV

My Cup of Life
I rim-fill with Today,
And drive Dull Care
upon his trackless way;
Call in the Piper, Joy,
and seek surcease
From Future thoughts—
nor reckon on the pay.

# SECOND CYCLE

## DOUBT OF MATURITY

*"What you, in other Days,*
*were wont to say,*
*That deeds, well done,*
*reflect the Future Day,*
*I now can grasp."*

## XXXVI

When years relentlessly
roll on and on,
Youth's fading Cycle
blends into the dawn
Of ripened Age, and, Lo—
the heart brims o'er
With memories of days
forever gone.

## XXXVII

The Cynic, freed of
arrogance, forswears
The tangled preachments
that Life's fulness bares;
Casts out the frail
abandonment of Youth,
While Doubt enmeshes
Reason unawares.

## XXXVIII

The vision broadens
as the years expand;
Hope checks the angered blow
aimed by the hand
Of ravished Fate,
and Faith renews the song
That Younger Years
could never understand.

## XXXIX

What you, in other Days,
were wont to say,
That deeds, well done,
reflect the Future Day,
I now can grasp — in part —
yet, let me ask,
Does living wholly
for the Future pay?

## XL

Today, for me, is with
Life's pleasures fraught,
The sweet quintessence
of contentment, caught
From out the Past,—
Must I, then, cast aside
Those pleasures and
consider them as naught ?

## XLI

Can I, once having run
the gamut of
All earthly Joys,
embracing Hate and Love,
Turn from that Past
with Conscience all-serene,
Discarding it as fares a
tattered glove?

## XLII

If I, repentant,
now should bravely seek
That fair Futurity
of which you speak,
Forget the tenets
of those other Days,
Would not the World
at once proclaim me weak?

## XLIII

Could it accept me,
I, who always sought
Destruction of those temples
Faith had wrought
Within your breast—
accept me, who renounced
The broader Creed that
greater minds have taught?

## XLIV

Is not the World
suspicious of the Man
Who, in his early years,
revised the plan
Of Looking Forward,
skeptical of all
Who preached the Gospel
of the Coming Clan?

## XLV

Could it, without compunction,
welcome me
Within the fold
of that Futurity
To which I always lent
a deafened ear,
Blind to the things
that blinder men could see?

## XLVI

I doubt it!—Man, though human,
cannot take
The barren word
of one who would forsake
The wayward Creed of Youth
and hold within
His Soul the Light
his betters strive to make.

## XLVII

Repentance cloaks the cowardice,
I claim,
Of one who has been seared
within the Flame
Of Blind Conceit; and, scorched,
cries out: "Oh, Youth,
What follies are committed
in thy name!"

## XLVIII

How oft I seek
communion with my Fate,
When, menaced by Remorse,
I, trembling, wait
Beside the Road of Hope—
but all in vain,
For Fate, all-unrelenting, screams,
"Too late!"

## XLIX

Sweet Faith, cursed by the
Wanderlust, sways on
To dizzy heights, turns,
beckons—and is gone.
I struggle after,
buffeted anon
By Doubt and by Despair—
their helpless pawn.

L

I sometimes think, when
Doubt assails my brain,
That, after all,
Life is an endless chain
Of vague regrets—the fruits
of maddened strife
Man makes to pilfer
Honesty of Gain.

LI

Fain would I be
of service to the Creed
You oft espoused,
for now I feel the need
Of such support; yet Conscience
prompts the thought:
Too long I failed
contributing my meed.

## LII

Is it within the scope
of Reason I
Can flaunt my record
of the Days gone by
Before your sect
in due repentance, and
Expect that Screed
in one brief hour to die?

## LIII

The bird, so sweet of call,
so fleet of wing,
That greets the dawn of
each new morn of Spring,
If in that Spring
its wings are broken, can
It fly in *Summer*
or as sweetly sing?

## LIV

Can I, my Spring ill-spent
as Fancy willed,
My Soul this moment
by its mem'ries thrilled,
Come, in the Summertime of Life,
to you
And own my Youthful Mission
unfulfilled?

## LV

When I unto your portals
late had strayed,
And on the heartstrings of your Trust
had played,
Could you accept me
but for what I am,
And welcome me
with Conscience unafraid?

## LVI

Ah, could I feel,
without a tinge of Doubt,
I might embrace that Creed
I used to flout,
And know that Faith
in which you now rejoice,
Then would I put the Past Reproach
to rout!

## LVII

But, having lived that Past
for Self alone
And toppled thoughts of others
from the throne
Of Reason, I am knouted
by Despair,
Who jeers: "Why this late Day
seek to atone?"

## LVIII

"And why," Doubt queries,
"undertake to throw
Away the Fruits
you struggled long to know
And now possess,
for something undefined?—
Accept the gifts of Youth—
'tis better so!

## LIX

"For," Doubt continues,
"Future is a dream
Whose dogma is
o'ershadowed by the gleam
Of Present Life —
why dawdle for a Prize
As vague as blurred
reflections in a stream?

## LX

"Loot Life of its abundance—
take your fill
Of Earthy Joys,
let Future score the bill.
Cram the voracious maw
of Now with spoils
Of Selfishness—
for Virtue's pay is nil!"

## LXI

"No," gently urges Reason;
"Life is fleet,
And one must mortar
bitter with the sweet.
Once having sipped
the tang of Folly, why
Abandon Hope,
acknowledging Defeat?

## LXII

"When one has drunk
his fill of false Desire,
Infertile Doubt proclaims
that to aspire
To nobler things were vain—
yet Conscience feeds
Its twigs of faith
to Hope's eternal fire!

## LXIII

"Pluck anchor from
the Harbor of Despair
And for Futurity's Domain
now fare.
What matter though the way
be tempest-tossed?—
A little while, and
you are sheltered there!"

## LXIV

"What?" argues Doubt.
"Renounce the Gains of
years,
A sacrifice to
palliate he jeers
Of Days to be—
because the palinode
Of Pagans has found
echo in your fears?

LXV

"Such thoughts out-Herod Life.
Youth's rainbow swings
Its arched magnificence
for what it brings
The Day that is!—When
Death draws on apace,
What care you for
the song the Future sings?"

## LXVI

Ah, thus assailed,
I turn to you for Light,
That you may guide
my vagrant steps aright!
Doubt, Reason, and Despair
their preachments bring,
And all convincingly
their tenets cite.

## LXVII

Maturer years have taught me
many things:
The heart is saddest that
most blithely sings;
There is no recompense
for wasted Youth
Save greater Wisdom
patient Future brings.

## LXVIII

Yet, having reaped the harvest
I have sown,
Can I, all self-existent,
illy-grown,
Illume your World
and share the manifold
Endowments I should
long ago have known?

## LXIX

What's done is done!—
To knock upon the gate
Of your Belief,
I fear it is too late;
My Courage fails—
I ever must remain
A Parasite for Doubt
to castigate!

## LXX

My Future! — dark,
abysmal, fathomless!
My Hope of nobler deeds
in Doubt's duress!
My path entangled
by puissant Fear,
My Soul denied the boon
of Faith's redress!

# THIRD CYCLE

## Wisdom of Age

*"Sans Creeds, Beliefs—*
*let me each Day be swayed*
*By one desire—*
*e'en now too long delayed:*
*To practice Human Kindness."*

## LXXI

As one who rouses
from imperfect sleep,
Or, cured of blindness,
sees the mighty sweep
Of rising sun, so Wisdom
springs from years,
Belated faith
with dawning Age to keep.

## LXXII

Hope, dashed and bruised on
Youthtime's heedless sea,
Comes limping
to the call of Destiny.
From out my breast
Despair and Doubt depart,
And Faith, so long held captive,
now is free.

## LXXIII

"Come," whispers Conscience;
"Life is short, forsooth,
In which to extripate
the lapse of Youth;
To turn from those entanglements
and seek
The cyclic Wisdom
later born of Truth.

## LXXIV

"The World applauds the man
who finds the ways
Of rectitude—
who struggles long to raise
The standards of Achievement,
and who strives
To leave behind
his sterile Yesterdays.

## LXXV

"The Springtime Cycle,
when the heart beats young,
And Future speaks to us
in alien tongue,
Must swing in its predestined orbit,
while
The paeans of Good Deeds
are left unsung.

LXXVI

"For Man, subservient
to Present's sway,
Precursor of a
sometime Better Day,
Is but a potsherd
of the Future Life,
United—later—
with the Mother Clay."

## LXXVII

One errs in early Years
when Fancy flings
Her peripatetic dictum
to the wings
Of Youth's abandon;
for one cannot hear
The song of Faith
the Conscience softly sings.

LXXVIII

But when, at last,

the flush of Wisdom sweeps

Into the Soul, and

Life its mandates keeps,

Man rouses from his lethargy

and finds

The boon of deeds—

for Faith no longer sleeps.

## LXXIX

Come now into that Knowledge
vast and wide
Which, by Youth's blurred decree,
I was denied,
I joyously accept
Life's proffered hand,
My visionary Creeds
all cast aside.

## LXXX

To falter by the way
is human—yet
When one uproots the sprigs
of deep Regret,
Transplanting Hope
into the veins of Life,
Faith's gleaming star
can never sink nor set.

## LXXXI

Be Kind!--Oh, phrase
with promise opulent!
Ornate with Love,
Devotion, Heart-Content!
Youth-scorned, you limn Life's
Falltime with the hues
Of Blessedness
beyond Earth's firmament!

## LXXXII

Be True!—Oh, words that drip
with sweet repose,
Perfume Existence
with the scent of rose!
Ignored in Springtime,
take my trembling hand
And guide the way
until my Life shall close!

## LXXXIII

Be Charitable!—
Oh, a thousand ways
I picture to myself
those empty days
Self-centered,
when I lifted not a hand
To help Mankind
from Trouble's venal maze!

## LXXXIV

Faith, let me, full-repentant
walk with you
In Charity's fair garden
drenched with dew,
And find that sweet Soul-solace
thriving there
Which, in those fruitless days,
I never knew!

## LXXXV

Hope, steadfast, merciful,
within my breast
No longer grow the weeds
of vague unrest.
With you and Faith
I face Futurity,
My life indeed
a Heaven doubly blessed!

## LXXXVI

Sweet Charity, whose name
my lips ne'er framed
In olden days,
I come now, unashamed,
Accepting of your bounty,
asking naught
But healing of the Heart
so early maimed!

## LXXXVII

Faith, Hope, and Charity—
though late the Day,
I come to you
deep homage now to pay;
In humble supplication,
bow before
Your shrine, to find
whatever peace I may.

## LXXXVIII

Mine eyes, unveiled,
now see the glory-dawn
That long ago
they should have feasted on.
Mine ears, attuned
to hear the Future song,
Are deafened to the Ages
past and gone.

## LXXXIX

Henceforth my every deed
I consecrate
To you, that you may
judge and estimate
The depth of my repentance,
and may know
No longer do I doubt
the ways of Fate.

## XC

Sans Creeds, Beliefs—
let me each day be swayed
By one desire —
e'en now too long delayed:
To practice Human Kindness,
and to bear
My Cross adown the path
Content has made.

XCI

And let me struggle
upward toward the Light
Of Peace, in all its
majesty and might,
Through deeds that serve to
gladden saddened hearts
And lead them through Despair's
deep shadowed Night.

## XCII

The Helping Hand!—
Oh, fragments that remain
Of wasted Life,
you must allay the pain
Of those who follow
in your early steps,—
Sift chaff of Doubt from
Truth's enduring Grain!

## XCIII

Though Wisdom blooms
impassioned with the wane
Of fleeting Life,
as sunshine follows rain,
One deed of Kindness
dissipates the clouds
Of Sorrow that from
Younger Days remain.

## XCIV

Deeds are not reckoned
by the flight of Days,
Nor by the salvos
nor tumult of Praise,
Nor Human Kindness
by its magnitude—
The World rewards Mankind
in fitter ways.

## XCV

Today—time-wise—

I fare the Lighted Way

From out the forest

of my Yesterday,

Rejoicing in

the blessed Doctrine of

The Helping Hand

in Trouble's fevered fray.

## XCVI

Though Age comes on,
'tis not too late to start
To heed the promptings
of a lightened heart.
The Fellowship of Man
is made complete
When each plods on
and fills his given part.

## XCVII

The burdens of the Weak
are for the Strong;
The sore of heart
are gladdened by a song;
The Happy Man is he
who scatters seeds
Of lasting goodness
as he goes along.

## XCVIII

Your Creeds—what are they?—
Shallow things, indeed,
When acts, not words,
are what the helpless need.
The World is small
and has no place for those
Who swathe their errors
in the skirts of Creed!

## XCIX

O Faith! O Hope! O Charity!—
I hold
No brief against the Life
that now is old,
Since you, all-bountiful,
have shared with me
The Wisdom you in Youthtime
left untold!

C

Behind, a barren Past!—
Before, fair days
That I shall pass
in Wisdom's joyous ways,
With here and there
a pause to lift some Soul
From out the gloom
Despondency may raise.

CI

My Future Days

in honest purpose spent

In Human Kindness,

broad, beneficent,

I shall have lived

to see the sands of Life

Run out their course in Wisdom—

all-content.

*TAMAM*

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